

Wildfires, are you Prepared?

More and more people are making their homes in woodland settings - in or near forests, rural areas or remote sites. There, homeowners enjoy the beauty of the environment but face the very real danger of wildfire. Wildfires often begin unnoticed. They spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. Reduce your risk by preparing now - *before* wildfire strikes. Meet with your family to decide what to do and where to go if wildfires threaten your area.

Practice Wildfire Safety

People start most wildfires... find out how you can promote and practice wildfire safety.

- Contact your local fire department or forestry office for information on fire laws.
- Make sure that fire vehicles can get to your home.
- Clearly mark all driveway entrances and display your name and address.
- Report hazardous conditions that could cause a wildfire.
- Teach children about fire safety. Keep matches out of their reach.
- Post fire emergency telephone numbers.
- Plan several escape routes away from your home - by car and by foot.
- Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together after a wildfire. Make a list of your neighbors' skills such as medical or technical. Consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.

Before Wildfire Threatens...

Protect Your Home

- Design and landscape your home with wildfire safety in mind. Select materials and plants that can help contain fire rather than fuel it. Use fire resistant or non-combustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling. Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. For example, hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus or fir trees.
- Regularly clean roof and gutters.
- Inspect chimneys at least twice a year. Clean them at least once a year.
- Install a smoke alarm on each level of your home. Test monthly and change the batteries two times each year.
- Teach family members how to use the fire extinguisher.
- Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear all flammable vegetation.
- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.

- Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.
- Mow grass regularly.
- Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire - resistant drapes.
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools; a rake, axe, hand/chainsaw, bucket and shovel.

Plan Your Water Needs

- Identify and maintain an adequate outside water source such as a small pond, cistern, well, swimming pool or hydrant.
- Have a garden hose that is long enough to reach any area of the home and other structures on the property.
- Install freeze-proof exterior water outlets on at least two sides of the home and near other structures on the property. Install additional outlets at least 50 feet from the home.
- Consider obtaining a portable gasoline powered pump in case electrical power is cut off.

When Wildfire Threatens...

If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information.

Follow the instructions of local officials

- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Confine pets to one room. Make plans to care for your pets in case you must evacuate.
- Arrange temporary housing at a friend or relative's home outside the threatened area.

If Advised to Evacuate, do so Immediately

- Wear protective clothing- sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your home.
- Tell someone when you left and where you are going.

- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

If you're sure you have time, take steps to protect your home:

Inside

- Close windows, vents, doors, venetian blinds and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Open fireplace damper. Close fireplace screens.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.

Outside

- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Place combustible patio furniture inside.
- Connect the garden hose to outside taps.
- Set up the portable gasoline-powered pump.
- Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near above - ground fuel tanks. Wet the roof.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home.
- Gather fire tools.

Wildfire and other types of disasters can strike quickly and without warning. You can cope by preparing in advance and working with your family to devise a Family Disaster Plan which includes a Disaster Supplies Kit. Discuss with your family why it is important to have a plan and practice your plan frequently.

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